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Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 29 June 1995, at 3 p.m.

President: Mr. KAMAL (Pakistan)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.25 p.m.

COORDINATION OF THE POLICIES AND ACTIVITIES OF THE SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND OTHER BODIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM RELATED TO THE FOLLOWING THEMES:

(a) COORDINATED FOLLOW-UP BY THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RESULTS OF THE MAJOR INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES ORGANIZED BY THE UNITED NATIONS IN THE ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND RELATED FIELDS (continued) (agenda item 3 (a)) (E/1995/86)

The PRESIDENT invited delegations to continue consideration of agenda item 3 (a) on the basis of the list of questions that had been distributed. He asked delegations to state whether they wished to deal with the various items together or separately.

After a procedural discussion in which Mr. DELACROIX (France), Ms. REBONG (Philippines), Mr. OKANIWA (Japan), Mr. NEBENZIA (Russian Federation), Ms. ARIAS (Colombia), Mr. OMEISH (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya), Mr. HOLTHE (Norway), Mr. PEDROSO (Cuba) and Mr. BAILLARGEON (Canada) took part, the PRESIDENT suggested dividing the questions into four groups which he invited delegations to examine in turn.

It was so decided .

Questions 1 and 2

1. What steps might be envisaged to reinforce the central policy-making role of the General Assembly, particularly the Second and Third Committees, in the follow-up to major conferences? In particular, how can the work of the Second and Third Committees be organized so as to establish comprehensive general policies for implementation of the results of conferences?
2. How can the Economic and Social Council assist the General Assembly in this task? In particular, how can greater complementarity be realized between these two major intergovernmental bodies?

Mr. DESAI (Under-Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development) began the discussion by suggesting that, in addition to the reports submitted by functional commissions, a thematic summary should be submitted to the General Assembly and the Council in order to provide a clearer view of the situation and requirements in each of the fields considered. The General Assembly and the Council could then concentrate their attention on such a report.

Second, a special session of the General Assembly was scheduled to take place in five years' time in order to consider the follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the World Summit for Social Development. The Council must consider the best way of preparing for those special sessions. The General Assembly, for its part, might consider rationalizing methods of preparing thematic reports, possibly by setting up a small intergovernmental working group to consolidate and unify the methods employed.

Ms. REBONG (Philippines), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 concerning the entire list of questions proposed by the President, said she thought overlapping was inevitable in the activities of the bodies of the United Nations system because the topics they dealt with were closely interlinked. It was therefore a question of improving coordination rather than of restructuring the entire system.

In order to achieve that goal, it would be necessary to identify the issues common to the major international conferences so that the Council could discuss them each year at technical meetings. Furthermore, if a single thematic report on follow-up activities were submitted to it, the Council could use that report as a basis for recommending resolutions to the General Assembly with a view to correcting the flaws in, and strengthening the merits of, the system.

The Group of 77 suggested that, for the Council to work more effectively, two three-day to four-day meetings per year should be devoted to coordination; the Council would then be able to monitor and channel activities, rather than merely ratifying them after the fact. The Secretariat might also hold information meetings in order to inform members of the Council of measures taken as follow-up to international conferences. It would also be useful to harmonize the composition and timing of meetings of the Council's functional commissions and to rationalize the services of the Secretariat in order to avoid overlapping of activities and functions.

With regard to the question of a steering committee, regularly-scheduled information meetings would make it possible to keep the members of the Council informed and make their dialogue with the Secretariat more fruitful.

With respect to resources, any decisions taken by the Council with regard to follow-up were, of course, subject to the availability of financial resources, and any strengthening of the Council would entail additional expenses which countries must be prepared to assume.

Lastly, the Group of 77 wondered whether there was not an overlap in the Secretariat between the role of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and that of the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development.

Mr. OMEISH (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that, unlike international conferences, the General Assembly was authorized to take decisions that entailed government responsibility in all fields. There was no question of the Council reconsidering the competence of the Second and Third Committees. The Council's mandate was clearly defined by the Charter of the United Nations, which stipulated that it was to make recommendations with respect to economic and social matters to the General Assembly, of which it was merely an instrument.

Questions of coordination and cooperation might at first appear simple but, in practice, they always caused problems because it was difficult, within the framework of the United Nations system, to strengthen the role of some bodies without encroaching upon the jurisdiction of others.

Mr. MAQUIEIRA (Chile) said one possibility might be for the Second and Third Committees to concentrate on the results of some international conferences. The agendas of those two committees were too full and included many secondary issues. If it proved impossible wholly to combine their respective programmes of work, their secretariats should at least attempt to harmonize them, and the bureaux of the two committees could be combined and made responsible for distributing tasks between them.

In the light of past conferences, it was clear that increased coordination of follow-up activities was required at the level both of the Secretariat and of intergovernmental bodies. Changes to such bodies must be continuous. Progress had already been made, but the work must continue if the Council wished to assist the General Assembly in its consideration of economic and social matters, without touching the Charter of the United Nations, but

also without limiting itself to endorsing actions after the fact; alternatively, the Committees might decide to report directly to the General Assembly without passing through the Council.

Mr. BAILLARGEON (Canada) said it was important to avoid entering into a discussion of the respective mandates of the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly and of potential conflict between the two. That was non-issue. The General Assembly was the highest-level United Nations body, and no one was questioning its pre-eminence. The present exercise was intended only to find a way to permit that body to play a far more active role in coordination with due regard for all the other tasks entrusted to it by the Charter, by emphasizing sectoral issues and defining overall policies, not only for the functional commissions but also for all the other components of the system. There was no question of formulating conclusions inconsistent with the mandate of the General Assembly, or of rewriting the Charter.

The first proposals made by the representative of the Philippines on behalf of the Group of 77 were on the right track. In particular, his delegation supported the idea of establishing common themes for discussions devoted to questions of coordination, which could be considered on the basis of joint reports. However, in order to improve the Council's functioning, it would be necessary to go further and ensure that that body established a much closer working relationship, not only with the functional commissions, but also with the bodies, funds and programmes of the entire system.

Ms. YANG Yanyi (China) said she fully concurred with the remarks made by the representative of the Philippines on behalf of the Group of 77. The only purpose of the current exercise was to consider ways of better coordinating follow-up to the major international conferences held within the framework of the United Nations. There was no question of reorganizing the United Nations system. The distribution of tasks between the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council was clearly defined in various Assembly resolutions, and the Council should not seek to assume responsibilities which were the sole province of the highest United Nations body. It was for the Assembly, not the Council, to consider what measures to take in order to strengthen the leadership role of the Assembly with regard to follow-up activities. The General Assembly was the supreme political body of the United Nations, and it was for it and its main committees, particularly the

Second and Third Committees, to define broad policies for strengthening international cooperation in the economic and social fields.

The Council, for its part, had an important role to play in follow-up to the major conferences, which included many intersectoral aspects and called for both vertical and horizontal coordination. In particular, her delegation supported the proposal of the representative of the Philippines that the Council should consider one or two major intersectoral issues at each substantive session during the discussion of the coordination segment. It also supported the idea of holding information meetings during regular sessions to keep members of the Council informed of follow-up activities carried out by the various functional commissions and by the bodies and programmes of the system.

Mr. DELACROIX (France) said it was important to avoid beginning a discussion of the relations between, and the respective roles of, the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. The complementary nature of those two bodies was clearly stated in the Charter and in General Assembly resolution 48/162.

It was essential to remain open-minded and not to forget that, the purpose of the current activity was to contribute to consideration of the Agenda for Development; discussion should not be limited to matters falling within the ambit of the Council.

With regard to the role of the General Assembly in follow-up to major conferences on economic and social matters, he noted that for many reasons - overloaded full agenda, a vertical approach to problems, and so on - that body was far from able to take on its proper roles of providing impetus and initiative or to propose the necessary dynamic and integrated approach to international cooperation for development. In that regard, the Under-Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development's proposal for the establishment of a kind of thematic report which would cover a number of major issues around which the General Assembly could organize its work was extremely interesting. In fact, that idea could be taken a bit further. Certain mechanisms such as resumed or special sessions, insufficiently used at present, would make it possible for the General Assembly to assess conference follow-up and, indeed, to consider major issues itself rather than convening additional conferences in order to do so.

With regard to measures that could be taken for better coordination of the work of the Second and Third Committees, while his delegation did not advocate combining the two, it might be a good idea to see whether they could hold joint meetings on topics falling within their respective areas of competence.

More specifically, if the functioning of the General Assembly was to be improved, Member States themselves must exercise a certain restraint. In particular, plenary debates must not merely repeat those which had already taken place in the commissions or the Economic and Social Council, and attempts must be made to shorten the agenda as much as possible by combining items on related subjects. That approach would make it possible to formulate integrated, coherent conclusions and perhaps to adopt joint resolutions as well.

Mr. MUDZAKIR (Malaysia) said he shared most of the views expressed by the representative of the Philippines on behalf of the Group of 77. He also supported the Under-Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development's proposal for the preparation of a thematic report; however, he believed that such a recommendation had already been made in 1993 and had not been followed up.

In order to ensure better coordination of major conference follow-up activities it was, of course, necessary to make improvements at the intergovernmental level, but it was above all at the level of operational activities, programme implementation and monitoring and evaluation that measures must be taken since those were the two weakest links in the chain.

The Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC), which was responsible for organizing the division of work within the United Nations system, could play a very useful role in that regard by ensuring that, to the extent possible, duplication and overlapping, which were very frequent at the level of operational activities and programme implementation, were eliminated.

In fact, the entire system should be evaluated in depth, beginning with the United Nations Secretariat, in order to bring to light any cases of duplication and overlapping and find ways of eliminating them. However effective the intergovernmental structure might be, if nothing was done to improve coordination at the programme implementation level, in other words, in the field, the current process would not produce the desired results.

Mr. OKANIWA (Japan) said that one of the missions of the United Nations, the only political organization with universal membership, was to make the international community aware of problems in the economic and social fields and propose solutions. Conferences held under United Nations auspices therefore took on great importance, and the Organization should pay far greater attention to follow-up to those conferences. In particular, the General Assembly should ensure that interest in the subject matter of a conference did not dissipate once it was over and that Governments effectively implemented the decisions taken on that occasion. However, the Assembly's agenda was currently too full for it to play that role and must be lightened. The European Union had made very interesting suggestions in that regard.

It was the Council's role to assist the Assembly in organizing its consideration of follow-up activities. For example, the Council might select and propose to the Assembly a number of issues to which the attention of the international community should be drawn. However, since the issues in question would be current ones, the Assembly must be able to make a selection shortly before its session rather than a year in advance.

Ms. POLLACK (United States of America) said that while she readily acknowledged that the subject under discussion was improved coordination in follow-up to major conferences, she did not think that such improvement was possible without reform. In particular, similar functions and entities must be consolidated and the mandates of bodies reconsidered. It was also important, as the representative of Chile had suggested, to seriously consider combining the activities of the Second and Third Committees of the General Assembly.

Furthermore, during sessions of the General Assembly, it was important not to go back to economic and social questions which had already been given in-depth and conclusive consideration by the Council.

In addition, the Council must be given the means to assume more fully its new functions as overseer of United Nations development programmes. In that regard, consideration should be given to the idea of creating an enlarged bureau or steering committee which could meet between sessions in order to ensure continuity and improve the effectiveness of follow-up.

Mr. HOLTHE (Norway) pointed out that the topic under discussion was the search for ways of improving system-wide coordination. If it appeared

that reforms would be necessary in order to bring about that improvement, the Council would decide to make them.

As the political authority of the system, the General Assembly was responsible for establishing general guidelines and policies to be followed and should therefore be responsible for the organization of, and follow-up to, major international conferences.

Consideration might also be given to strengthening the Assembly's supervisory functions; for example, it might select common topics to be dealt with and request the Council to give careful consideration to the relevant follow-up activities for the system as a whole.

The Council, in turn, might play a complementary role and assist a strengthened Assembly in coordinating and monitoring activities carried out by various bodies. After considering the reports of subsidiary bodies, the Council might limit itself to presenting to the General Assembly the essential questions and coordination problems which called for a decision at the highest level.

Those measures should transform the General Assembly, which, at present, too often appeared to act merely as a rubber stamp, into a genuinely dynamic policy-making body.

Mr. SINGH (India) said he saw no need for the Council to make unsolicited recommendations to the General Assembly; it should limit itself to seeking ways of improving follow-up to conferences.

From that point of view, it seemed pointless to consider the creation of a steering committee since the Council itself, by statute, already played that role and it was the Member States themselves who would be represented on the Council and on such a committee. The same was true of the organization of work of the Second and Third Committees: the General Committee of the General Assembly, not the Council, was responsible for harmonizing the agendas of the major committees. Neither would it be fruitful to organize joint meetings of the two committees since, there again, the same Governments were represented in both bodies.

His delegation had similar reservations concerning an expansion of the Council's Bureau; if the intention was to strengthen the role of the Council, it would be better to seek other ways of strengthening its executive powers.

Mr. NEBENZIA (Russian Federation) informed the representative of India that the Council was inevitably called upon to invoke the General Assembly since it was before the latter that it placed its proposals.

With regard to the consolidated reports which it was proposed to submit within the framework of the Council's coordination and operational activities, he wondered whether the Council itself would prepare them, at what level of authority they would be prepared and to whom the Council should transmit its suggestions concerning them.

There had always been coordinated follow-up to conferences. The Council was scheduled to consider three matters associated with major problems with global implications during the current session, and, at its next session, it would be called upon to consider the mandates and activities of some of its subsidiary bodies. The General Assembly laid down policies, while the Council dealt with strategies: it distributed resources and normally ensured coordination of activities.

It was probably the relationship between the Council and ACC which most needed adjustment. That relationship essentially concerned budgetary questions, and greater importance should be given to programme and operational activities. The Council should hold joint meetings with ACC, rather than with the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC).

Mr. PEDROSO (Cuba) said the Council was dwelling on matters which did not really fall within its ambit and were of primary concern to the General Assembly. He reminded the representative of the Russian Federation that the Assembly working groups responsible for programming matters received instructions only from the Assembly, never from the Council.

Strictly from the point of view of coordination, his delegation agreed on the whole with the suggestions made by the representative of the Philippines on behalf of the Group of 77. Above all, coordination at the level of governments and the Secretariat must be improved; moreover, those two types of adjustment were related. It would also be useful to improve coordination of the intergovernmental bodies which had not been mentioned in the points that the President had proposed for discussion. In any case, his delegation was opposed to the establishment of a new Secretariat department responsible for coordination since that would undoubtedly entail the risk of duplication.

Mr. TEJERA-PARIS (Venezuela) said he thought the segment should be strictly limited to describing the problems and conflicts with which the various bodies were faced. It would then be for the Council to seek solutions on a case-by-case basis. By so doing, the Council would merely be engaging in consultations, which was well within its mandate.

He saw no need to broaden the competence of the Council, which need only carry out its functions with greater energy and determination. If little was achieved in the way of results, the reasons could be sought at a later date.

Ms. BIRGIN (Australia) said she considered the first of the points of discussion suggested by the President to be extremely important. In order for the General Assembly to retain its central role in follow-up to major conferences, it must remain in close contact, particularly through the intermediary of the Council, with the principal financial and commercial institutions. The Council should therefore begin to strengthen its ties with those institutions.

Mr. KACOU-GERVAIS (Côte d'Ivoire) said the questions raised by the President were all the more relevant because they were currently the subject of informal discussions throughout the world.

The Ivory Coast considered that the Council's role was fundamentally linked to that of the General Assembly. The current paralysis of the latter inevitably extended to the Council as well, particularly in its role as coordinator. Only if member States lightened the burden on the Assembly would it be possible to re-energize the Council. As the European Union and Japan had rightly proposed, the Assembly and the Council must be given far less heavily-charged agendas; the same was true of conferences since it was currently impossible for either the Council or the General Assembly to ensure genuine follow-up to them.

Mr. PAPADATOS (Greece) noted that the Second and Third Committees of the General Assembly sometimes dealt with the same issues, for example, women, crime or drugs trafficking, questions which had both social and

economic aspects. Since the General Committee of the Assembly sometimes allocated agenda items rather hastily, joint meetings of the two committees should perhaps be organized in order to consider those issues.

Mr. DESAI (Under-Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development) said several matters had been clarified by the discussion of the first two points suggested by the President.

The members of the Council seemed generally to agree that, in order for coordination to be effective, it must at some point be based on consolidated or thematic reports. However, opinions within the Council seemed considerably more divided with regard to strengthening the role of the General Assembly in the follow-up to major conferences.

Improved coordination seemed impossible unless all the functional bodies were placed on an equal footing. However, it must be remembered that those bodies could not all work with the same concentration as, for example, the Commission on Sustainable Development.

Some delegations recommended the holding of briefings, an idea which should perhaps be pursued as a way of keeping the Council better informed. It might also be a good idea to restructure the meetings and sessions of the Council itself if consolidated reports on the results of conferences were to be submitted to it.

He emphasized that, while conferences did, of course, play a crucial role, they did not necessarily cover all the activities of the United Nations system. The Council, for its part, was and would remain responsible for all activities of the system in the economic and social fields. Furthermore, since conferences sometimes dealt with matters not directly linked to those fields, the words "results of conferences" must be interpreted very broadly.

Mr. SPETH (Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)) said it was clear that the international community strongly desired to strengthen the United Nations system in the economic and social fields, which implied a strengthening of the Council. There was no question of the Council replacing the General Assembly since the two bodies were complementary; the Council's function was one of synthesis rather than legislation. But it must be remembered that conferences did not cover the

entire range of activities of the United Nations system, nor was that system required to follow up, at least at the operational level, on everything said or suggested at conferences.

Moreover, a clear distinction must be made between the two functions of the United Nations, which was responsible, on the one hand, for establishing principles and setting policies and, on the other, for providing development assistance, particularly of a technical nature. The Council might well focus cooperation for development on funds and programmes with narrowly-defined goals, such as the United Nations Childrens Fund (UNICEF), independently of the overall responsibility of the Organization as an intergovernmental body capable of taking up any matter it wished. As such, the Council could, therefore, deal with economic policy, development or social policy at the international level. It was a mistake to think, as some did, that the United Nations should refrain from dealing with certain questions of international economic policy because they fell within the exclusive jurisdiction of other institutions.

Despite the "conference fatigue" which had resulted from the proliferation of major conferences, the General Assembly and the Secretary-General seemed to wish to organize another on the issue of development finance. If that plan was carried out, such a conference should be an occasion for the United Nations to deal with certain issues of great importance for economic growth such as access to technology, the relationship between commerce and development and the way in which globalization could serve the interests of countries which did not yet have access to the world market.

The PRESIDENT pointed out that consideration of the coordination segment was made up of four stages: the statements made on the previous day, the current discussion, the discussion meeting scheduled for the following day, in which the administrator of UNDP would participate, and the negotiation of collective conclusions. He requested that one of the Vice-Presidents should organize an informal open-ended consultative group in order to negotiate conclusions.

Mr. OMEISH (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) challenged the idea of the complementarity of the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly

mentioned in the President's second question: in fact, the Council was the principal body with regard to economic and social cooperation and worked under the supervision of the Assembly in that field.

The PRESIDENT invited delegations to begin consideration of the second group of questions:

3. How can the Council better carry out the responsibilities for coordination of the United Nations system assigned to it by the Charter with regard to follow-up to major conferences? How can its role in coordinating not only the organizations of the United Nations system but also its own subsidiary bodies with a view to programme harmonization be strengthened? What would be the consequences of strengthening the Council in terms of frequency of its meetings, the level of participation and the Bureau?

4. What would be the implications of a strengthened Economic and Social Council in terms of its responsibilities for the vertical coordination of intersectoral issues at the country and inter-agency levels and the horizontal coordination of intergovernmental bodies? How could a genuine dialogue be promoted between the Council and the funds, programmes and specialized agencies of the system? Would it be feasible to establish a steering committee composed of the Council Bureau, the heads of the Council's functional commissions, the chairmen of the inter-agency task forces and the Administrator of UNDP?

Mr. BURNETT (United Kingdom) maintained that it was important to evaluate coordination mechanisms as well as substantive activities. Those mechanisms had been established by the General Assembly in its resolution 48/162, but the challenge was to ensure their proper functioning. Thus far, the Council's control had been more nominal than factual and, henceforth, the various phases of its session must be made to work together effectively in the practical promotion of coordination, particularly in view of the overlapping of the various commitments made during major conferences.

The high-level segment should not only be an occasion for dialogue but, when necessary, should result in the adoption of collective conclusions that set genuine policy guidelines. The coordination segment should deal with the thematic areas which presented real problems or offered particular opportunities. In the past, insufficient time had been devoted to

inter-agency and intergovernmental mechanisms and, in future, greater attention should be paid to the role of the Council as a lower level of the coordination process.

The operational activities of the United Nations for the international development cooperation segment must provide guidelines for funds, programmes and specialized agencies. At present, the governing bodies and specialized agencies usually ignored the Council's views, a situation which must be remedied. To that end, the reports of those governing bodies must be submitted far enough in advance, even if that entailed changing their meeting schedules. Furthermore, the Council must choose topics of interest to a number of institutions and must make judicious recommendations rather than mere exhortations destined to remain a dead letter.

The general segment, perhaps the most important, must be devoted to supervision and coordination of the Council's subsidiary bodies, however tedious and politically uninspiring the study of agendas and consideration of decisions might be. Proper coordination required meticulous work and careful preparation on the part of both Member States and the Secretariat and, thus far, their performance had left something to be desired.

The United Nations bodies were already participating actively in coordination within the Council, but not, perhaps, in the right way; their representatives should include individuals with experience in the field, and the Council must serve as a think-tank and source of political recommendations rather than as a forum for the reading of prepared texts.

Mr. CAMARA (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)) said the Council's role in coordinating the activities of the United Nations system and cooperating with the specialized agencies was essential in follow-up to conferences. Effective participation of the specialized agencies at a high level in the Council's work could greatly contribute to increasing its efficiency and re-energizing it.

The idea of a steering committee raised questions of a constitutional nature. Each specialized agency, had signed an agreement with the United Nations on the basis of Articles 57-63 of the Charter and would have to be represented on such a committee.

As a result of the great increase in requests for reports, some FAO technical services were spending up to 50 per cent of their time on report

preparation, particularly in the field of humanitarian assistance, at the expense of their other responsibilities. It would therefore be desirable for the Council to select the topics to be considered under the coordination segment a year in advance in order to allow more time for the Secretariat and the specialized agencies to prepare their reports. Furthermore, perhaps those reports could be spread out or staggered. Coordination was expensive, and the President had done well to mention the fundamental question of mobilization of the necessary resources for follow-up to conferences in his list of points for discussion.

Mr. MUDZAKIR (Malaysia) asked what type of mechanism might be used to coordinate the contributions of the Bretton Woods institutions which participated in follow-up to conferences. It might be possible to schedule both regular submission of reports and discussions between the heads of their secretariats and those of the other specialized agencies, possibly within the framework of the ACC. At the intergovernmental level, dialogue with the heads of multilateral bodies was a well-established practice which should be strengthened, and Bretton Woods institutions might be invited to submit some type of report as part of the coordination segment.

Mr. HAMBURGER (Netherlands) said that the Council must above all identify areas of overlapping and deficiencies and distribute conference follow-up activities among the various components of the system. That coordination function also concerned the functional commissions to the extent that they reported to the Council. In that regard, it was essential to have a clear idea of what should be coordinated since there were various types of coordination.

His Government supported the idea of a consolidated report, which would greatly facilitate the work of the Council and consequently that of the General Assembly. As few reports as possible should be requested; that would require from Member States a discipline which had thus far been lacking. Reports prepared on request should be brief, cover the questions to be considered and describe the available options. If those three conditions were met, the Secretariat would be able to play a more stimulating role in establishing discussion guidelines.

The PRESIDENT invited the members of the Council to give their opinion on the idea of establishing a "steering committee" which would meet

regularly and provide a forum for dialogue between United Nations Member States and bodies. It would assist in the preparation of reports rather than considering them after the fact, as was currently the case.

Ms. REBONG (Philippines) said she was convinced that for the Council to be strengthened as a coordinating body, it must meet more often, since a single regular session did not allow it enough time for in-depth consideration of the questions placed before it, particularly with regard to the coordination of conference follow-up. Regular meetings, the frequency and length of which remained to be established, would make possible a genuine dialogue between members of the Council and of the Secretariat, representatives of other intergovernmental bodies, the Bretton Woods institutions and the other specialized agencies. The Council should follow the example of the governing bodies of UNDP, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and UNICEF, which met regularly several times a year in addition to their annual sessions; those meetings were not an occasion for reading prepared texts but gave rise to genuine dialogue.

Her Government agreed with that of Malaysia: the Bretton Woods institutions had an important role to play in follow-up to conferences and should be invited to keep the Council informed of their activities and to submit reports or send representatives to it.

Mr. HEDAYAT (Indonesia) said that, as an experiment, the Bureau of the Council might hold a meeting with the bureaux of the various funds and programmes in order to consider ways of ensuring effective coordination; the discussion could then be expanded to include the specialized agencies. A report on the results of those meetings might be submitted to the Council.

His Government agreed with that of the Philippines that the Council should meet more regularly and might, for example, devote one three-day meeting per year to coordination and related topics.

Mr. SINGH (India) associated himself with the statements made by the representative of the Philippines and said he saw no need for a steering committee of the type described in the informal document. The Council should serve as its own steering committee. It should meet as often as it deemed necessary and invite anyone it wished to participate in its deliberations. It might invite the chairman of a given technical commission, or even the chairmen of all the commissions, to some of its meetings.

Ms. HAGEN (International Labour Organization (ILO)) associated herself with the observations made by the representative of FAO concerning the extremely close cooperation between the specialized agencies and the Council and the desire of those agencies to contribute to the missions and mandates that resulted from major world conferences. Often, they alone were responsible for ensuring that the commitments made at those conferences became a reality.

The specialized agencies participated actively in major international conferences and took the observations and programmes of action that resulted from them into account in planning their own activities, usually in consultation with their governing bodies, in order to determine to what extent they could incorporate those elements into their own priorities.

With regard to horizontal coordination of intergovernmental bodies, it would be useful to take into account the experience of the governing bodies of the specialized agencies and the various bodies in which priorities were set in order to find ways of coordinating follow-up to international conferences.

Mr. DELACROIX (France) said he had not yet spoken on behalf of the European Union concerning the matter under consideration and asked the President to confirm that the discussion would continue on the following day.

The PRESIDENT informed him that discussion of the matter would continue at the next meeting.

Mr. SALMAN (Iraq) noted that the conferences which had taken place in 1994 and 1995 represented an expansion of United Nations activities in the economic and social fields. It was important to coordinate those activities if maximum benefit was to be derived from all those conferences. That also presupposed a clear division of responsibilities, and the Council's role should not be limited to the preparation of reports, but should include follow-up.

With regard to point 4, his Government thought a new mechanism was unnecessary and that it would be better to work to improve existing mechanisms and avoid duplication.

Mr. HOLTHE (Norway) said that the current discussion had already elicited many valuable contributions both in written form, as working

documents, and in the form of oral statements and that it would be a good idea to record all the constructive, practical and concrete proposals and to produce a synthesis of them.

Ms. YANG Yanyi (China) emphasized that there was absolutely no need to establish new follow-up mechanisms. As the representative of India had pointed out, the Council served as its own steering committee and, as the representative of the United Kingdom had pointed out, the functional commissions, programmes and funds were already involved in the follow-up and coordination activities that were part of the search for better coordination. In future, it was to be hoped that a more productive dialogue would take place during the coordination segment and in the meetings proposed by the Group of 77.

The PRESIDENT said he hoped that the discussion concerning the possibility of a steering committee would continue at the next meeting and that the Council would give particular consideration to the question of the frequency of its meetings. If the Council was to serve as its own steering committee, the length and frequency of its meetings must be determined.

The meeting rose at 6.20 p.m.